



## MINUTES

### A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE CITY MUNICIPAL ELECTION LAWS

#### VIRTUAL MEETING

Thursday, August 9, 2023 6:00 PM

**Task Force Members Present:** Faye Gaskin, Scott Gibson, John Michael Gudger, and Andrew Miller. Eileen Leahy, an *ex officio* member, was also present.

**Others Present:**

- Mark Hildebrand, City of Annapolis TV

A quorum being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

On motion duly made and seconded, the minutes of the July 12, 2023 meeting were approved.

Ms. Leahy discussed the questionnaire that she developed with Ms. Gaskin and Mr. Miller. The questionnaire will be open through the Friday following the meeting. Ms. Leahy also discussed the methods used to make the community aware which included social media posts, media releases and outreach to community groups.

Noting that the questionnaire was still open and not desiring to sway future responses, there was limited discussion of the preliminary responses. It was interesting to see that (at this time) there was a lot of consensus on most issues.

The Task Force decided to keep the final report in the format that these initial responses were shared. Survey responses will be further reviewed at a future meeting.

Ms. Leahy also discussed research on expanding how other cities and towns construct their Boards of Elections. Most have three members. Takoma Park has up to 7 members with staggered terms and with an intent of ensuring each ward has representation. Salisbury has a 3-member board with a staggered 6-year term. The City of Bowie has 9 members and 4 alternates with a two-year term, but also appears to completely run their own elections and may be more involved in the day-to-



day operations. Many – if not most – have their elections administered by their County Elections Office.

It was noted that adopting state law or having the County administer elections may address the concerns that were underlying the recent suggestions to expand the Board of Supervisors of Elections.

Next the Task Force discussed questions that were referred to the Office of Law.

The Office of Law's initial opinion is that the City Council likely lacks the authority to put a question on the ballot. (Because state law specifically empower the counties to do it and is silent on municipalities, it is assumed the State did not intend to empower municipalities.)

The City Code does empower citizens to petition an action of the City Council to a veto referendum. Neither City Code nor State Law empower citizens to place an original idea on the ballot through a Ballot Initiative.

The Task Force then discussed how it would approach its remaining work noting a preference for hosting an in-person public hearing.

There being no further business, the Task Force adjourned at 7:07 PM.

Respectfully submitted,  
Scott T. Gibson, Secretary